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VOL. 3, ISSUE 10 | JANUARY 2010 | RS 50
R.N.I. NO: DELENG/2007/19719

gfiles

INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT

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'THE INDUSTRY HAS BOUNCED BACK WITH A BANG'

BIG BOSS

secretary, textiles | rita menon

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COVER PHOTO: RAJEEV DABRAL

BIG BOSS

secretary, textiles | rita menon

'The formula is passion and hard work'

Even a first-time meeting with Rita Menon, Secretary, Textiles is imbued with a sense of camaraderie. The 1975-batch IAS officer from the Uttar Pradesh cadre is informal, witty and extremely knowledgeable about her Ministry. Originally from Old Delhi, she is a postgraduate in economics from Delhi School of Economics. Before joining the IAS, she was a lecturer at Miranda College for two years. She has worked with the Ministries of Health, Finance and Defence at the Centre. In Uttar Pradesh, she has served as MD, UP Financial Corporation; Additional Chief Executive Officer, Greater Noida; and Vice-Chairman, Ghaziabad Development Authority.

interviewed by ANIL TYAGI

gfiles: *How do you describe your Ministry and what is the present scenario in the textile sector?*

Rita Menon: In February 2009, when I took over, there was some gloom in the textile industry; 2008 and 2009 have been somewhat bad, compared to earlier years. And the first few months of 2009-10 also were not so great. The greatest visibility was in the organized mill sectors because they are looking to policy and looking to support to bring in change faster than the other sectors. At the same time, handicrafts has also taken a dip because, with the recession in the US starting in 2007-08, export of hand-knotted carpets has taken a plunge. The challenge was to restore confidence, act together on how we could get the sector back to the 10-12 per cent growth rate of previous years. It is a complex Ministry because it deals with the whole range of fibres apart from cotton.

We have a big arena for synthetic textiles, notably in Maharashtra and Surat. Then there is this question of fibres and how we reconcile the needs of the fibres industry and jute. Jute is a major issue because of the Jute Technology Mission where we are dealing with the whole range of fabrics, jute, silk, wool. This is also the sole Ministry with the responsibility for promoting handicrafts and handlooms – a big task. Then we do a lot of referred development and education through the institutes of handloom technology, the Weavers Service Centres, Common Facility Centre and the university in Coimbatore, the eight Textile Research Associations and National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT). New NIFTs are coming up and new points like technical textiles are coming up. So, it is a vast Ministry and extremely exciting canvas which touches the life of every Indian.

gfiles: *You have varied experience at the*

Continued on page 4

'The challenge was to restore confidence, act together on how we could get the sector back to the 10-12 per cent growth rate of previous years.'

gfiles
INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT

VOL.3, ISSUE 10 | JANUARY 2010

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Published and printed by Anil Tyagi on behalf of **Sarvashrestha Media Pvt. Ltd** at M. P. Printers, Writers & Publishers Ltd. , B-220 Phase II, Gautam Budh Nagar, Noida - 201305, (UP)

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From the Editor-in-Chief

YOUNGSTERS aspiring to become civil servants as well as those studying at the academy in Mussoorie prior to taking up their first postings would do well to pay heed to this issue's cover story featuring Textiles Secretary Rita Menon. And not only for the content which is rich with unique insights and analyses of this key sector of the Indian economy but also for what it tells us about the degree of difficulty in functioning effectively as a senior bureaucrat. With economic growth now the politically correct watchword as well as an imperative of survival in a rapidly globalizing world, a civil servant running a department or Ministry must be a combination of administrator, technocrat, market analyst, corporate boss, star gazer, trouble shooter, arbiter and trendsetter.

This may sound intimidating but it is today's stark reality that needs to be dinned into the heads of IAS probationers as well as those who tutor them. Most people imagine that the life of an IAS officer at the district level is no more than collecting revenues, performing magisterial functions and inspections, maintaining law and order and collecting data on food production, procurement and distribution. That was true when India lived in simpler times. Today's national agenda requires a massive reorientation, starting at the district level.

The demand for separate small states may be growing for political reasons. But the reality is that the Indian economy, with the thrust towards spurring rural participation in national growth, has never been so integrated. With virtually every economic segment – small and large – having become an inseparable cog in the turn of the growth wheel, there needs to be a guiding and balancing hand to ensure that India's increasingly unfettered market is kept free and well oiled as well as the receptacle of technology and innovation that keeps it globally competitive with benefits flowing to all players.

Ensuring an India First win-win scenario, yet balanced with a level playing field for competitive domestic as well as foreign players, is now one of the prime tasks of the modern bureaucrat – or supercrat. Menon presents the face of the new bureaucrat. If you think the textiles industry means factories spinning yarns or the export of tie-dye and jute fabrics, think again. As Menon explains, the industry is complexity personified. And it is for this reason that it cannot be left in the hands of an industrial oligarchy or cartel.

This 10-12 per cent annual growth sector involves weavers, jute growers, fashion institutes, the conflict between synthetic and natural fibres, banana, pineapple, pulp and wheat industries, silk, cotton, Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme, FDIs, the running of mega PSUs like NTC, medical textiles, agri-textiles, defence-related and infrastructural applications.

This is only one example of the formidable knowledge needed in order to run any Ministry in today's India. Nobel laureate Amartya Sen is right when he says that the state must play an increasingly responsible role in balancing interests and promoting equity in all spheres of economic activity.

INDERJIT BADHWAR

LETTERS: The snippet about Dayanidhi Maran's lobbying (Bric-a-Brac, December 2009) was interesting. Couldn't believe that Maran could be so vain, and servile to personal interest rather than the responsibility towards the nation, especially as he heads a crucial Ministry looking after the problems of the textiles sector and the population dependent on the business.

Varadarajan VK, on blog

Make efforts towards uniting Hindus and

Continued on page 4

LETTERS

Continued from page 3

making them a force. Their votes should not be divided.
Krishna Kumar Dhandhania, on blog

gfiles is a good magazine for knowing about the various issues in governance. The content is very informative. If possible, kindly provide the earlier issues of the magazine as html pages instead of pdf files as the full pdf file takes time to download and open. Alternatively, the pdf files can be article-/section-wise so that the reader can open only the pdf file he wants to read.
JJR Anand, via email

With regard to your cover story, "Trapped bureaucracy", it is shocking that you are saying they are trapped. It is the opposite. In fact, it is they who have trapped the politicians. If they are so serious about the issues in the country, they should stop giving lectures in *gfiles* and take some visible action themselves. Only then can they expect the people of this country to back them.
Dhananjay Pillai , Kochi

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State and Centre. Apart from field and corporate work, you have held sensitive jobs at the Union Ministries ranging from Defence, Home, Finance to Health and Family Welfare. What is the most common and challenging administrative problem you have faced?

RM: On a macro organizational level, turning around UP's Finance Corporation was a huge challenge. So was drawing new investment into Greater Noida for industries in UP. In Defence, there was a challenge: to get orders for these companies and to see they were executed. Sometimes, even to stop imports or calibrate imports. I've fallen in love with each assignment. In Finance, I found a very regulatory department like expenditure highly exciting.

gfiles: *How does the current assignment differ?*

RM: It's partially regulatory because we have two sorts of policy – fiscal intervention and interventions relating to foreign trade. It involves a lot of implementation because of NTC's turnaround stories.

For driving the NIFTs, Textile Research Associations and Sardar Patel Institute of Textile Management, we've got to be very active in terms of vision and foresight. So it is part regulatory, part facilitator, part implementer, part handholding and a great deal of monitoring.

gfiles: *A jumbo 72-strong Working Group under your chairpersonship is formulating the National Fibre Policy. Has the group completed its report and what are its main recommendations?*

RM: Not yet. There is manmade fibre, natural fibre, banana, pineapple, pulp, wheat from which the fibre has been extracted. Then we have cotton and silk. In silk there are many conflicting stories. The South Indian Karnataka belt wants a particular dispensation and the Banarasi belt wants some other particular dispensation. The area under silk has gone down because of infrastructure reasons. There are different groups for technical textile, for apparel, retail garment, jute, silk, pulp and cotton industry. That's why there are a lot of members, we've tried to make a broad base so that the stakeholders from the industry have their free say.

gfiles: *A month before the constitution of this working group, National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council (NMCC) had re-invited bids for undertaking a study to evolve a Comprehensive Fibre Policy for the textiles and garments sector of India. Why this overlap in policy formulation?*

RM: There is no overlap. My predecessor had perhaps requested the NMCC to formulate the fibre policy. The Minister and I felt that the massive details relating to the sector were really with us along with very much greater clarity about who the stakeholders are so NMCC's V Govindarajan was very happy to pass on whatever they had done to us. They were rather happy with the idea of Ministry of Textiles doing it because they don't have much staff and, further, it would have meant the double effort of calling us and calling stakeholders and getting their act together. So, it was actually by mutual consent and it is a very natural responsibility of the Ministry of Textiles.

gfiles: *Are you working towards tax and regulatory parity for all natural and manmade fibres? If so, what is the time-frame for unleashing full and fair competition among all fibres? Will the proposed policy just be fibre-centric or a comprehensive textiles policy that will replace the one announced in 2000?*

RM: This is a difficult question. The ideal would be a fibre-neutral policy. I feel that the imperatives of taxes are different and along the line chemicals become polymer, polymers become fibre, yarn becomes fibre, fibre becomes a weave, weave becomes cloth, cloth becomes a processed cloth, processed

'We are enabling Self Help Groups to make diversified products which are entering living rooms and bedrooms. Saris are made with mixtures of jute'

cloth becomes a garment, garments are worn. There have to be downstream effects of basic indirect taxes. With everyone being on a par, the needs of the revenue department relating to custom and excise at the source itself really come in the way of reducing the duties along the way. Because duty has to be carried and when you export, it has to be minus the baggage.

gfiles: *Will it ever be possible to have a level playing field for all segments in this faction-ridden textiles sector?*

RM: I don't think it's faction-ridden. It is really a case of where the market lies. For example, jute has been perceived in everybody's mind as an unromantic fibre. But through our jute diversification programmes, we are bringing it into the drawing rooms. We are enabling Self Help Groups to make diversified products which are entering living rooms and bedrooms. Saris are made with mixtures of jute, there is fabric made with jute and there are home textiles being converted by jute. So it's not faction-ridden. It's a question of prioritization. Dayanidhi Maran has brought all the segments covered by the Ministry of Textiles into the looking glass. We are supporting handlooms and handicrafts as much as we are supporting jute, wool and silk. We certainly know that the textile organized sector is a major revenue earner, and major export revenue earner. We would like to give great emphasis on all aspects. We also know that NIFT has brand equity. We have to make the NIFTs grow and proliferate in every state. Everybody can coexist happily. The focused product scheme of the foreign trade policy was never mentioned for handicrafts and handlooms, and jute. For the first time, in foreign trade of 2009-14, they've been included. Slowly, a lot of the segments of the textiles industry are coming under not protection but under growth perception. I think it'll continue. I see a great future for this Ministry.

gfiles: *How do you reconcile the ever-conflicting interests of different segments, say, cotton exporters versus cotton yarn producers and between synthetic fibre producers and textiles mills?*

RM: By discussion and understanding each other's problems. Positioning the difficulties as assessed for their moderation. I've been in dialogue with every council very actively. I think that has brought about a lot of trust. The deliberations of the national fibre policy are meant to bring forth a common document on what the textile Ministry perceives as the needs and perceptions of each of the segments of the industry which will be open to public scrutiny and which will also be seen by the State governments. So that there is an adequate amount of education on what we feel.

gfiles: *On the issue of cotton exports, the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI) has been making noises for quite some time. On November 3, 2009 it demanded suspension of cotton exports.*

RM: There is some panic this year compared to last year because international prices for cotton have increased steadily and sharply. Last year, because of recession abroad and virtually no recession here because the domestic industry supported the textile industry to a great extent, it could be mitigated. Along with that, there were floods here in 2009. The demand for cotton in the international world has grown and thus the international price has gone up which is why the domestic prices have also gone up. There was apprehension the crop would come down a lot this year. But it is going to be 305 lakh bales. Last year, it was 280 lakh bales. We are in a secure position relating to cotton supplies. There are apprehensions about trading in cotton, that good cottons will go overseas. But I think the numbers show that we are all right.

gfiles: *Are you allowing cotton export?*

RM: It's a free trade. There are no barriers and the Minister has been very clear in telling the councils there is no tampering with the policy at present. We are in a comfortable cotton crop. The arrivals are as per the schedules and there is no need for the industry to panic because the amount they can consume and utilize is already with us.

gfiles: *How much for domestic utilization?*

RM: The government's stand is very clear. It's a free market price determined by domestic arrivals, prices in the *mandis*, prices in the international markets and the collective prices of all the international markets. It's a question of demand and supply. The government has nothing much to do with the pricing. There has been no regulation of the cotton prices. So some sections of the industry are nervous and they bring their concerns to the Minister, who is very accessible. This is all a dialogue and there is no change in the policy.

gfiles: *What has been the impact of fiscal stimuli on the textiles sector announced in 2008-09 and the 2009-10 Budget? Has the industry come back to the earlier growth momentum?*

RM: It has. The September-end figures have been very heartening. The industry has bounced back. The government helped with 2 per cent interest subvention. There was continuation of the rate on the duty entitlement passbook. We had Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme (TUFS) which we are going to cover later in the interview. Here is what we did to help the industry. The industry had a lot of TUFS demand. TUFS carry on year on year for eight years. I purchase machinery, I get the margin money or capital subsidy, as the case may be, and interest subvention of 5 or 4 per cent goes on over eight years through my repayment pattern. Because there were unmade demands, thanks to non-provisioning of the finances, we were happy that we got extra allocation for TUFS this year. From an average allocation of Rs 2,500 crore, we were able to get Rs 4,500 crore. And about extra Rs 2000 crore for TUFS. It was released to the industry within 72 hours. It's basically driven by the commercial banks. The commercial bank appraises the scheme and sees if the internal IRR is adequate and sees the credit worthiness of the company. They take a call about financing them for the investment. Then we come in because we give the subvention. We have to make the money available to commercial banks or the lending agency. We don't handle the money.

gfiles: *Both the Ministry and CITI are broadly targeting 16 per cent growth per annum to take the textiles sector to $115 billion from $52 billion in 2006. The objective is to increase India's share in the global exports market to 7 per cent from 4 per cent during this period. Are we on track and will these targets be surpassed?*

RM: As far as the export targets are concerned, certainly we can. As far as textile growth percentage is concerned, I'm confident that with the investments taking place and which will continue to take place, and the interest generated for foreign direct investment, we certainly will be able to do it. A calibrated, concerted and focused effort has begun only now. In October-November 2009, the Minister led a high-level delegation to Switzerland, Italy and Turkey, which are the three focus points to begin with other than France, Germany and US. He led a delegation of a few Ministry people, 26-28 top-line businessmen. There was great respect for the India story, for what the Minister had to say and the businessmen who came to hear him were about 170-75 in Italy and in Turkey. Switzerland, which is an area for capital goods, basically a machine-making area, had about 55-60 businessmen hearing him with attention. Looking at the follow-up of these initiatives, there will be a lot of partnerships, mergers and a lot of people might set up shop in India. It is not an overnight or one-offer fair but trends are very positive.

gfiles: *The government has recently announced a policy to list all PSUs that have been earning profits during the last three years in a row. Is there any PSU under the Textiles Ministry that meets this criterion?*

RM: The National Handloom Development Corporation, which is basically the implementer for the Mill Gate Price Scheme and Yarn Depot Scheme, has been making profits. Cotton Corporation of India has been making profits and has been declaring dividends over the past few years. I don't think that in the Ministry of Textiles, PSUs are on the radar as yet. When they come we'll obviously go along with government policy but I've not yet had any kind of communication asking for these details about any company. Besides, their profits are not so large.

gfiles: *Have you given any thought to asking NTC to list its 19 joint ventures on the stock exchanges with the ultimate objective of unlocking the value of its investments?*

RM: The joint ventures are very fresh and very new. They are only in the last fiscal. The question of listing them doesn't arise. We don't have 19 joint ventures, we have five plus 11 – 11 have not yet taken off and five that have been entered into are very fresh. They are still getting their act together on getting the machinery and the directions. Listing them at the moment is out of the question but yes, as soon as the NTC turnaround companies are of stable vintage. They are doing well and operating profits. NTC is getting no support for wage assistance in the fiscal year 2009-10. The moment they turn around, we certainly will think of listing them. Because they do have lots of assets.

gfiles: *The Ministry has achieved a silent revolution in restructuring of a mega PSU (NTC) by closing 76 units out of 119, giving a golden handshake to 60,384 employees out of 78,000 employees in 2000-2001, by transforming 19 units into joint ventures and putting in place a land sale-based self-financing revival plan for the company. Can the NTC restructuring model be applied in other over-manned and loss-incurring PSUs such as Air India?*

PIB

'We also know that NIFT has brand equity. We have to make the NIFTs grow and proliferate in every state. Everybody can coexist happily.'

RM: I don't know if a company like Air India can be put on a par with NTC. If you recall, NTC has something like 122 mills. We had a tradition of manufacturing and we had the tradition of yarn supply. So we are not a service industry, we are a service industry to the extent that we supply yarn to the textile manufacturers. And NTC yarn is respected. So we are certainly not like Air India. This pattern could not be matched by Air India because there is no manufacturing. A service industry has very strict criteria and is very susceptible to global and national trends whereas yarn in any case is a raw product or raw material for a very big industry. Certainly, the example of NTC and the success we've achieved could be taken up by some State textile sector companies because all States have set up textile units in the past. In UP, State textile corporations were running at one time and producing a lot of yarn.

gfiles: *What's the formula to reinvent and rejuvenate all these corporations?*

RM: The formula is, one, passion and hard work; two, government support by way of waiver of the large interest burden, accumulated losses and Cabinet decisions to that effect; three, fast-track mechanism which the Cabinet orders through a Group of Ministers that meet very frequently to monitor the progress of these mills; four, dedication by the NTC family.

The government did not give us any money for the rejuvenation. The government gave permission to NTC to use its surplus assets, unlock them and utilize them in the rejuvenation formula. So that's really how the NTC story unfolded. NTC cleared the dues of its employees through VRS very fairly. We don't have too many court cases nor do we have any stays by the Supreme or High Courts. The pain of a labourer who is laid off through a settlement package is something you and I can't understand. He can always be a deterrent to the whole process.

gfiles: *An official release in September 2009 quoted you as saying that the government is considering providing a regulatory framework to achieve 25 per cent growth per annum of technical textiles against business-as-usual growth of 11 per cent. Please enlighten us on this emerging area.*

RM: Technical textiles is a very new area. We had positioned a technology mission to the Finance Minister in this Budget. But he was very right in saying that we should do some homework on the matter and we could take it up in the next Budget. We have to identify four areas: 1. Medical textiles like heart valves, cottons, bandages, gloves, gowns; 2. Agri-textile i.e. by using greenhouses for achieving higher productivity and higher yields from more seasons; 3. Security or protective technical textile like bulletproof jackets, firemen's outfits, anti-fire kits and all those things specially for the military, paramilitary and security forces; 4. Infrastructure technology which means using technical textile to make roads better, the Prime Minister's Gram Sadak Yojna, utilizing them in brick ticket projects, where we know there is investment. We have identified four textile research associations as centres of excellence and given them funds for research and laboratory facilities.

We are happy that the Navy and CRPF have accepted and notified our standards. So we now see it as the next leg of the journey and this is growth of consumption, not growth of technical textiles. We are consuming only 4 per cent technical textiles in India though it's a huge market. The developed world is using 25 per cent of its total technical textiles. We want to reach this figure and what we pitch is roughly 16 per cent. We are moving in that direction. The fibre policy encompasses the way ahead for technical textiles.

gfiles: *The farmer growing cotton in the field – how is he being benefited?*

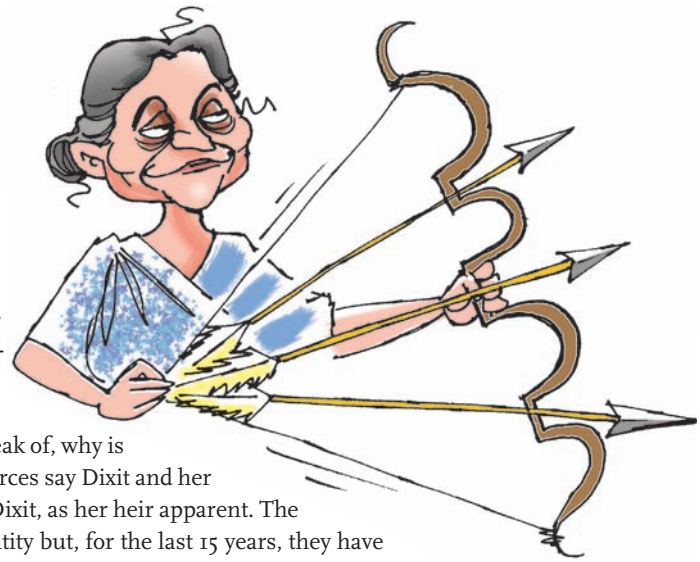
RM: The minimum support price for the crop last year, which ended in October 2009, was 45 per cent higher than the previous year's price.

gfiles: *But input has also increased. What is new in this?*

RM: Have paddy and wheat prices increased in this ratio? The previous year, cotton was grown on 94.06 lakh hectares, now on 102 lakh hectares. If it is a loss-making proposition, who will grow cotton? g

(with inputs from Naresh Minocha*)*

Dixit reigns over her realm
gaddi to go to son



IF you want to learn how to put up such a fight against your rivals that their petty games are nipped in the bud, take a leaf out of Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dixit's book. In the past 11 years, she has become a master at this, and not only consistently retained her seat but also systematically finished stalwarts like Jagdish Tytler and Sajjan Kumar.

Now, when she doesn't really face any threat, to speak of, why is she so insistent on cutting down her opponents? Sources say Dixit and her cronies want to establish her son and MP, Sandeep Dixit, as her heir apparent. The Akali (Badal) politicians in Delhi constitute a non-entity but, for the last 15 years, they have been given a job to do in every election. And they are doing it well. The Dixit camp plans to install Sandeep as the next Chief Minister of Delhi during the third year of his mother's current rule. To this end, Ma Dixit is cultivating the right people. She reputedly never misses any function organized by Mrs Manmohan Singh or Mrs Montek Singh Ahluwalia.

However, one threat still lingers – in the form of Ajay Maken, the State Minister for Home Affairs. It is yet to be seen when the tigress will spring upon him in the style befitting her training by her father-in-law, Congressman Uma Shanker Dixit.

Grassroot graft
auction of panchayat polls

THE bees will naturally flock to wherever there is nectar and, in contemporary governance, there are dollops of it in the panchayats. The Centre's fund, percolating to the villages, has generated quite a buzz among the village mafia politicians. In Madhya Pradesh, panchayat elections are being auctioned with the connivance of the mafia ruling the villages so that the candidates can get elected unopposed. In a village near Sagar with as little as 900 voters, it is estimated that the auction price will be as high as Rs 12-15 lakh. In another village, the budget of Rs 1.2 crore sanctioned to a *sarpanch* is yet to be accounted for. And, in the bigger villages the price goes up to Rs 50 lakh.

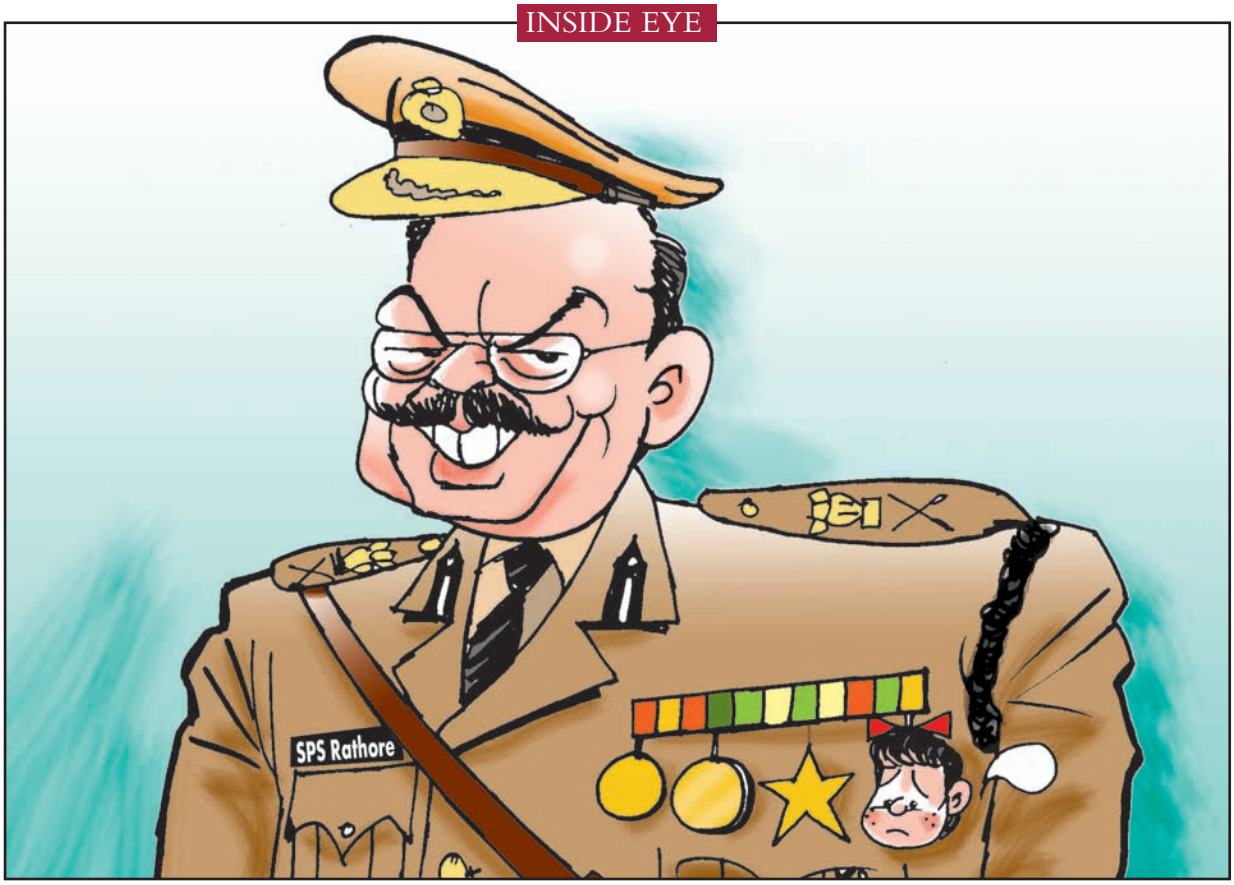
It only goes to show how true Rajiv Gandhi's words were when he said that not more than 15 per cent of allocation by the Central government reaches the people it is meant for.

A house for Harsimrat
badal wife clings to bungalow

SO what if the Parliament Housing Committee rules stipulate that a first-time elected MP will be allotted a flat, not a bungalow? If you are the wife of Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal, how can you possibly be expected to live in a flat? Harsimrat Kaur, first-time MP from Bathinda, is living in the bungalow at 12, Safdarjung Road where husband Sukhbir used to live before he became an MLA. Badal did not vacate the bungalow when he became an MLA and the reason was obvious. Harsimrat Kaur got elected to Parliament and moved into it.

Jai Prakash Aggarwal, Congress MP from Delhi, is the Chairman of the Housing Committee who has been asking all the first-time MPs to vacate

ILLUSTRATIONS: ARUNA



the bungalows to which they are clinging on some pretext or other. But Harsimrat is being left in peace. Naturally, many of the other first-time MPs are questioning why different standards are being applied. Who will enlighten them?

Defence Ministry on guard
army fracas spreads gloom

A sense of unease pervades the corridors of power in the Ministry of Defence. Army chief Deepak Kapoor is a wise man who has weathered many storms. His Military Secretary, Lt-Gen. Avdesh Prakash, has been recommended for dismissal by a court of inquiry into a land scam by the Eastern Command chief, Lt-Gen. VK Singh. Gen. Kapoor believes Gen. Singh has exceeded his brief because, as Army chief it is he who has the prerogative to decide what action has to be taken and against whom. Gen. Prakash retires on January 31, so the decision on the dismissal is being delayed. Now, all this is intolerable to Defence Minister AK Antony, who is a stickler for rules.

Another reason for the wariness in the Defence Ministry is the launch of a vicious campaign against Gen. Singh – unprecedented in the Army. An upright officer, Gen. Singh may be the next Chief of Army Staff. Antony has reacted to this cold war by instructing Gen Kapoor to clear the Prakash issue before tackling any others.

Whose witness, anyway?

The Indian judicial environment is loaded against those who depose in court against criminals

by Col R Hariharan

ON May 5, 2007, a mob of supporters of Alagiri, son of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi, torched the Madurai office of a Tamil daily, *Dinakaran*. Three employees of the newspaper were burnt alive. Police charged "Attack" Pandi, a criminal "history sheeter", and 16 others with the crime. The case was transferred to the CBI on May 19, 2007. A Deputy Superintendent of Police, Rajaram, was included as an accused for his negligence when the incident occurred. The CBI filed a 32-page chargesheet and 85 witnesses testified before the court during the hearing. The prime witnesses were Sub Inspector Aladiyan, the first eyewitness, and the *Dinakaran* Deputy News Editor, the second eyewitness. They turned hostile while deposing before the court. On December 9, 2009 the Principal District Sessions Court, Madurai acquitted all the 17 accused for want of eyewitness evidence.

The story had a happy ending when the ruling first family patched up with Karunanidhi's nephews, Kalanidhi Maran and Dayanidhi Maran, who own the newspaper. As in fairy tales, they are living happily ever after. It did not matter to anyone that the entire incident was telecast live, showing the criminals setting fire to the newspaper office while political bigwigs raised slogans to encourage them.

The Dinakaran case was neither unique nor its verdict surprising. There have been scores of instances where those in power have systematically ensured cases against their interests are snuffed out in courts, using the very instruments of governance and law enforcement. The Best Bakery case in which 14 people were killed when a mob torched Best Bakery in Vadodara during the post-Godhra riots in 2002 is a well known example of the state's misuse of all instruments of governance to obstruct justice. It is an outstanding example of the perils of giving evidence and how witnesses are used as pawns in the game.

Images of Gujarat riots: no witnesses?

Witnesses' reluctance to come forward to give evidence has created a thriving 'false witness' business.

There are hundreds of such instances where witnesses backtrack or turn hostile in appeal courts because of criminal intimidation or prosecution pressure. The reality in this country is that rule of law applies only to those who court the wrath of rulers. That is why such cases are ignored by everyone unless they involve prominent individuals. Even then the media is selective as it takes a risk in covering such cases and any muck-raking could be dangerous for them.

In most of these cases, nobody asks why the witnesses turned hostile or why the court did not take any follow-up action against them for perjury. The courts understand that giving evidence against the high and mighty can be a risky proposition. Witnesses' reluctance to come forward to give evidence has created a thriving "false witness" business. Outside criminal courts, one can engage individuals for a few hundred rupees to depose as witnesses. This cosy arrangement has the connivance of unscrupulous policemen and lawyers. Judges also know this; so in many cases courts do not take the evidence of such witnesses seriously. But where it suits the judges, their evidence would be taken into reckoning.

Every citizen has a social responsibility to give evidence if he witnesses a criminal act. The law construes it as abetting the crime if he does not do so. But if an average citizen is asked, "Will you give evidence?" an emphatic "No" would be the immediate reply. It might be termed socially irresponsible. But in this country, people keep social respon-

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sibility for talk shows and use practical wisdom to survive one day at a time. I am not too sure that even I would readily volunteer to give evidence, although I am stepping into the last quarter of life. My instinct for self-preservation might take over. After all, I have only one life to live!

In the current scene of law enforcement and delivery of justice, witnesses probably run more risks than criminals under trial. The enormous number of witnesses turning hostile in appeal courts is testimony to this. Otherwise how do we explain the extraordinary phenomenon of criminals caught on live TV getting away with their crime?

The Indian judicial environment is loaded against witnesses. Witness protection is often proffered as a remedy for this. Witnesses are summoned to the court whether they have money or not. Nobody cares if the witness is the breadwinner of the family and cannot afford to be away from his work. Even if he reaches the court, there is a real possibility of the case being adjourned. And this story is often replayed any number of times as adjournments come one after the other. Meanwhile, he runs the risk of being bribed, intimidated, kidnapped, or even killed. The Supreme Court has aptly summed up the problem in one of its judgments: "A witness has to visit the Court at his own cost, every time the case is deferred for a different date. Nowadays it has become more or less fashionable to repeatedly adjourn a case. Eventually the witness is tired and gives up."

The judiciary has made efforts to improve the level of protection available to witnesses. In the Nitish Katara murder case, Delhi High Court spelled out witness protection guidelines as early as October 2003. It made the Member Secretary, Delhi Legal Services Authority the competent authority to administer the guidelines. According to the guidelines, the investigating officer has to inform the witness about the new guidelines and the police commissioner is responsible for protection of the witness. Presumably, even these guidelines provide the bare minimum for protection of witnesses; and witnesses deposing against the police hardly get confidence.

Best Bakery sufferer, Zahira: flip flop justice

Police plan for witness protection

- The witness will be transferred from his hometown to another location.
- The witness will be given a new name, identity and passport.
- The government will provide the witness with a job related to his occupation.
- The government will also assume responsibility for security of the witness' entire family.

Witness protection has become crucial in cases of terrorist attack. Based on their experience in a series of terrorism-related cases in Mumbai, the police have formulated a four-point plan which takes witness protection to a new level. *(See box)*

But, in the existing environment where politicization of criminals is a reality, can State governments ensure real protection for witnesses? With political considerations, rather than performance, overriding police appointments, the ability of the police to execute foolproof plans for witness protection is questionable. Moreover, with their ever-increasing commitments, at present the police do not have either the manpower or infrastructure to administer an effective witness protection system. And how long can the state provide for protection of a large number of witnesses when courts continue to groan under a huge backlog of cases that drag on for years?

The Indian Evidence Act, 1872, does not contain specific provision for protection of witnesses against threats, intimidation or any inducement that would prevent them telling the truth. This was probably why the Law Commissions had been considering mostly the soft aspects of allowances and administration of witnesses. The National Police Commission Report (1980) did no better. However, in 1996, the Law Commission recognized the need for protection and recommended: "Witnesses should be protected from the wrath of the accused in any eventuality." However, it did not suggest any measures for physical protection of witnesses. Even after that, the 178th Report of the Law Commission dealt with the issue of witnesses turning hostile but not witness protection though the two

Nobody cares if the witness is the breadwinner of the family and cannot afford to be away from his work. Even if he reaches the court, there is a real possibility of the case being adjourned.

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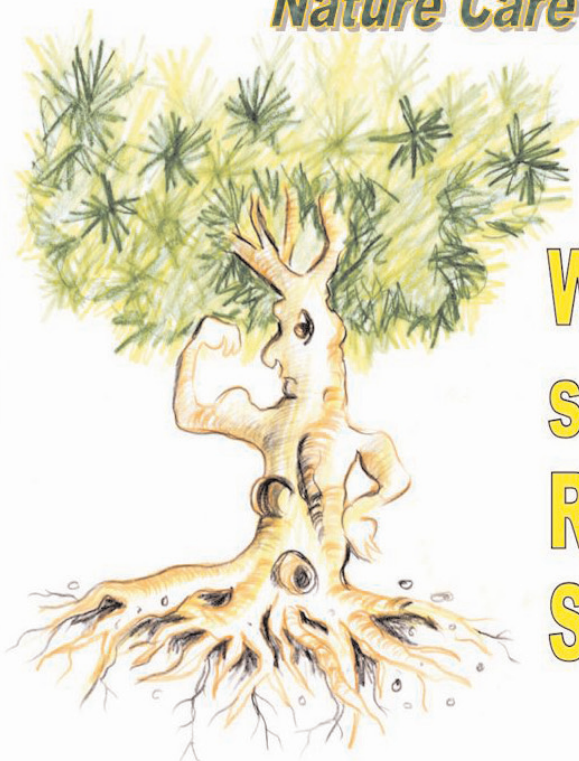

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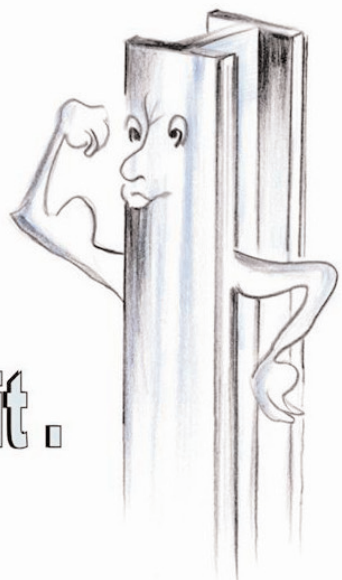

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Blindfolded APPROACH

by VIJAY SANGHVI

MANY politicians with a shallow understanding of the human psyche believe that every evil in society can be cured by legal measures intended to curb such tendencies. Union Law Minister Veerappa Moily is among them. Some time ago, while addressing a conference of Central Bureau of Investigation officials, he had the brilliant idea of using stringent legal provisions to punish corrupt public servants. He even proposed 71 fast-track special courts for CBI cases.

His outburst came in response to CBI complaints that it faced difficulty in proceeding against senior officials steeped in corruption as they enjoyed Constitutional protection. Even as Law Minister, he was seemingly oblivious to the fact that legal provisions are punitive and not preventive. Only a few get caught redhanded but even they manage to escape penal action because of the weakness inherent in the system.

BJP leader LK Advani has several times blamed the absence of Terrorism and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA)-like provisions for the failure to prevent terrorist strikes. Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi often rants against the Centre for not approving his legislation for detaining suspected criminals for long durations. Apparently, both believe that legal provisions are the deterrents that can control crime and terrorism. They conveniently overlook the fact that since time immemorial, even mortal fear of God and dread of burning in hell have not deterred people from crime.

How can a man determined to sacrifice his life for the cause he has been led to believe is his ordained duty to uphold, ever be deterred by provisions in the statute book? He has no fear of either the law or death. Every sane person would disapprove of and even condemn his action but he has already been brainwashed.

Attack on J&K assembly: could TADA stop it?

The root of corruption lies not merely in human greed but also in the state's provision of freedom and opportunity to interpret the law and rules that are generally structured as prohibitive. The basic assumption behind the framing of legislation is that every citizen is dishonest. So he must be deterred from certain actions by the state and be threatened with punitive measures. The economic model that India followed for the first four decades of independence was restrictive, with draconian powers invested in bureaucrats to control every aspect of economic enterprise with use of human creativity. If 80 per cent of higher income is taken away by way of taxes, no incentive is left for generating wealth by honest means.

In 40 years, violation of law was made a cheaper and easier way out than compliance with it. Private individuals readily offered a small percentage of potential profits if the official who com-

Mere existence of draconian laws do not solve the problem of crime and terrorism. It requires political acumen and vision to understand the roots

REUTERS

manded authority to grant permission was willing to interpret rules in a way that would make the permit easily available. When the bureaucrat allows himself to be used to mobilize resources for the party or persons in power, his conscience is killed. Moily has been a Chief Minister. He would surely know how resources are mobilized for the party and whose services are exploited. His outcry against corrupt officials and his threat of legal provisions will have little impact in curing the system plagued by corruption. It amounts to rhetoric for public consumption.

In 1986, Finance Minister VP Singh wanted to empower tax officials with draconian authority to visit any home or office at any time to verify tax law compliance by the owners of such premises. His Minister of State, Bhairavdan Garhavi, protested vehemently. Garhavi told Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi that no government could assume that every citizen was suspect and dishonest. Nor could government invest such draconian power in the hands of an enforcement agency with a reputation for rampant corruption. Apparently, VP Singh had more faith in the honesty of his officials than of the citizens. Rajiv Gandhi saw the weight of Garhavi's argument and ruled out the proposal.

Advani and Modi also have this faith in officials, as evidenced by their demand for investing law enforcement agencies with draconian powers for detention of suspects without trial or their own accountability in case injustice to the detained person is proved. Such a stance is in total disregard of human rights and individual liberty. It is all the more surprising as Advani and hundreds of his partymen were victims of the misuse of the infamous Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) during the Emergency. All parties have been led to believe by the law enforcement agencies that such a legal provision is essential to curb crime and terrorism. It makes their task much easier because they do not have to produce tangible prima facie evidence to get the court order for detention.

Advani had the advantage of availability of the detention law (TADA) as Home Minister in the Vajpayee government. Yet he, or the fear of this law, could not prevent terrorist attacks on strategic locations that were under high security.

Advani had the advantage of availability of the detention law (TADA) as Home Minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government. Yet he, or the fear of TADA, could not prevent terrorist attacks on strategic locations that were under high security. There were attacks on the Kashmir Assembly and Parliament. Even religious places, including a site considered holy by the Muslim community in Kashmir, were targeted by terrorists. It ought to have become clear to Advani and his supporters that the mere existence of a draconian law is not enough to tackle the problem of terrorism. It requires political acumen and vision to understand the problem and its roots.

The fake encounters in Gujarat as well as suspected cases of hundreds of innocent lives sacrificed in the name of encounters with terrorists in Punjab and Kashmir reflect an eerie aspect – that no authority in the government, either politician or senior bureaucrat, had sought to verify that the policemen had not played the triple role of accuser, judge and executioner by seeking evidence for the action. Men were killed without trial, files were closed and shelved without anyone asking awkward questions. The middle class was unperturbed because the policeman had said the killed person was a terrorist.

If the policeman can get away with such draconian power, he will naturally use the power of his uniform for other purposes as well. How is that crime any less serious than murder? Can any legal provision end the misuse? Many of our politicians believe so. g

TELENGANA'S RELUCTANT MARTYR

KCR might be astute and an opportunist, but he is no Potti Sriramulu

by TR Ramachandran and Diptendra Raychaudhuri

K Chandrasekhar Rao's fast can be interpreted as political opportunism; the fight for a cause as chasing an ambition. But then that is characteristic of politicians. At the moment, however, his diminishing political career is soaring.

All this happens to be thanks to Sonia Gandhi, with whom he has cordial relations. Most Congress bigwigs opposed the formation of a new state. Yet, Sonia decided that KCR's demands had to be conceded. During his fast, the BJP jumped into the fray to get a foothold in Telengana. But when Sonia's emissaries contacted KCR and his partymen, they were told that he would remain with the Congress if the party took the initiative to form Telengana.

KCR knew Telengana would not be created overnight. He informed Sonia, whom he referred to as "Mother" after breaking his fast, that he would wait till 2014. That is the year when the next Assembly election will be held in Andhra Pradesh. With this assurance giving her enough space, Sonia instructed her party managers to send a stern message to all concerned in the State Congress that the decision to create Telengana was final. The message had already travelled home. The rebel MPS and MLAs had started to fall in line. However, they demanded an escape route to save their constituencies.

It is not clear whether, at this stage, Sonia Gandhi backtracked. But, without consulting KCR, senior Central Ministers prepared a statement that said, "The situation in Andhra has altered.... There is a need to hold wide-ranging consultations with all political parties and groups in the state." This statement was interpreted as indicating that the process of formation of a new state had been kept in abeyance.

The result: It not only gave the Telengana movement a fresh boost, but also provided ammunition for KCR. Just days after Sonia was called "Mother", her credibility in the Telengana region plummeted to near-zero. Students were back on the streets, the campus of Osmania University again turned into the epicentre of the movement, and attacks took place on the assets of non-Telengana leaders in the region. While KCR appealed for calm, Congress MPs from the area were compelled to threaten resignation. At the moment, the future is uncertain.

KCR has played a brilliant game, renewing his demand for Telengana at a time when Telegu Desam Party supremo Chandrababu Naidu had already passed a resolution for a separate Telengana in his party's Politburo and sent it to the Centre. That was before the last general election, which Naidu fought along with KCR's Telengana Rashtra Samiti. The Praja Rajyam Party had not opposed the demand then. The BJP was in favour of it. Only the Congress, then under YS Rajasekhara Reddy, kept silent. Reddy opposed it. So did various Congressmen with business interests in the Telengana region. Yet, at her three election rallies in the Telengana region, Sonia declared that the Congress was "sympathetic" to the demand for a separate state.

Thus, those who are currently arguing that the Congress victory in the Telengana region nullified the demand for a separate state are erring in analysis.

KCR went in for the fast to compel the Congress to take a stand. Sonia had promised him in 2004 that she would back the Telengana issue if there was broad unanimity. But YSR had stood in the way of unanimity. It is not strange that his son, Jagan Mohan, Tirupati MP Chinta Mohan, and the richest MP, Rajagopal Lagadapati, are now trying to stoke anti-Telengana sentiment. All of them are trying to secure their future by playing on the "united Andhra" sentiment. These people have compelled Naidu to "review" his stand. However, he is currently non-committal while

It is also unlikely that the ailing KCR will be able to achieve his dream of being the political numero uno of the new state as his party has suffered serious erosion of trust.

PIB

KCR: how long will he wait?

Chiranjeevi, the sole leader of Praja Rajyam, has thrown his weight behind the pro-Andhra forces.

Whether KCR will be able to carry his popularity forward is a moot point. He has no organizational network to support his political campaign. If nothing emerges in the next six months or a year, the movement may pass into the hands of the other, more radical elements. It is believed that the Maoists are supporting and infiltrating the movement.

The Centre did anticipate trouble in Andhra Pradesh with the announcement of a proposed Telengana state. That is why the Congress Core Group threw the ball in Chief Minister K Rosiah's court regarding getting a resolution adopted in the Assembly for creation of a separate state. This assumes significance as the Core Group did not hold consultations beyond its closed doors nor was such a crucial matter referred to the Cabinet.

Considering KCR's deteriorating health owing to the fast, the Manmohan Singh government could not afford to waste time in making its stand clear. The Centre was willing to back the creation of Telengana provided the Assembly took an unambiguous stand on it. Those favouring Telengana believe the Centre is now backtracking on its pledge.

Like all politicians, KCR is an out-and-out opportunist. He began his political career as a Congress student leader and then switched loyalties to the Telegu Desam Party. He has served as a Minister in Andhra Pradesh and Deputy Speaker of the Assembly. He severed relations with the TDP after Naidu refused to make him a Minister during his second term as Chief Minister. Immediately thereafter, he launched the TRS in 2001. Three years later, he was elected to the 14th Lok Sabha. He had six MPs, became a UPA ally and got the creation of Telengana state included in the National Common Minimum Programme. It was political expediency that led to the TRS becoming a UPA ally to boost the arithmetic in the game of numbers for securing a simple majority in the Lok Sabha. Initially handed the shipping portfolio, he offered to relinquish it when the DMK sought it. The Prime Minister appreciated the sacrifice and subsequently gave him Labour and Employment.

Telengana supporters clash with police: unexpected fallout

REUTERS

HOWEVER, in 2006 KCR bid adieu to the UPA government because it was dragging its feet with regard to Telengana state. The Centre had constituted the Pranab Mukherjee Committee to talk to all sections in Parliament and the stakeholders in Andhra Pradesh. Around this time, there was also talk of setting up the second States Reorganization Commission due to the increasingly shriller demands for new states. It was evident to all that the creation of Telengana could not be undertaken in rapid-fire manner with a definitive decision. No deadline had been issued to the Pranab Mukherjee Committee to complete its task.

At the culmination of all this drama, with KCR being the main leader but one who did not want to put his life at stake *a la* Potti Sriramulu, and with some pulling strings from the sidelines for their own political gain, it seems unlikely that Telegana will be formed any time soon. It is also unlikely that the ailing KCR will be able to achieve his dream of being the political numero uno of the new state as his party has suffered serious erosion of trust. The people's support is for Telengana state, not for KCR. So this burning issue, which flares up during every decade, will once again die out in due course for evolving a consensus on it in Andhra Pradesh is akin to chasing a mirage. g

bn uniyal

'India's most organized criminal force: THE POLICE'

L'affaire Rathore recalls the searing insight of a sagacious judge

AS a cub reporter in the Lucknow of the early 1970s, I knew a police officer, Paras Nath Mishra – then DIG, Economic Offences in the UP government. Mishra enjoyed immense popularity among his colleagues, Lucknow Coffee House denizens and also a wide circle of people from all walks of life—bureaucracy, politics, journalism, mill workers, peasants, trade unions and whatnot. He was what we then called a *khaanti* or hardcore Marxist but he was friendly with leaders and activists of all political parties and intellectuals of all political persuasions. He was known as an upright officer as well as a competent one.

It was from Mishra that I first heard the famous quote from former Allahabad High Court judge Anand Narain Mullah that I still fondly reiterate to my friends and colleagues whenever an opportunity comes my way. The late Justice Mullah is said to have observed during the hearing of a case: "The most organized criminal force in India is the Indian police."

Those words were brought to my mind once again by the news reports about the misdeeds of Haryana DGP SPS Rathore. How lamentably apt they sound in the backdrop of Rathore's blatant and brazen subversion of the entire system of governance from the lowest police station to the highest levels of the state investigating institution, the CBI!

SANJAY

Rathore: tip of the iceberg

'There can be no corrupt junior officer without an equally corrupt senior officer above him or an equally, if not more, corrupt political boss above'

Rathore has proven the sagacity of Justice Mullah's observation. The quotation deserves to be carved on stone and installed in front of every police station as well as the CBI headquarters.

Mishra also used to emphasize, with the insight gained from his own job, that "there can be no corrupt junior officer without an equally, if not more, corrupt senior officer above him nor a corrupt officer at the top without an equally, if not more, corrupt political boss above him". Yet again, these words are borne out by every act of Rathore. Mishra also said that the more corrupt an officer, the greater favourite he was of his corrupt political boss.

Ordinary citizens often wonder why politicians go so far out of their way to defend, assist and even promote dishonourable and dissolute officers like Rathore – as several Haryana Chief Ministers have done. The reason is that it is only such officers who, once caught committing a dishonourable act, will go to any length to carry out the bidding of their political boss. It is a symbiotic relationship. And such relationships are not based on monetary gain alone. Quite often, there are a number of other modes and means of exchange between the two partners in such relationships—land, votes, vehicles, sex. Once the relationship between an officer and his political boss sinks to such a low level, there is no limit to the moral depths it can plumb. g

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RAJASTHAN

Dedicated efforts - Significant achievement

Glorious Morrow...

Giving top priority to common man's interest the Rajasthan Government has ensured participation of people of lower strata in the development of State. Under the energetic leadership of Chief Minister, Shri Ashok Gehlot, the government has taken several important decisions, leading the State on the path of development. It stands committed to provide responsive, transparent and accountable government. State government is determined to build a developed, prosperous and green Rajasthan.

In short just in span of one year, the Rajasthan Government under the leadership of Chief Minster, Ashok Gehlot has redeemed the trust bestowed upon it by the public, fulfilling its promise of working for the welfare of the common man. The government has taken several important decisions, leading the State on the path of development. It stands committed for providing responsive, transparent and accountable governance.

The main objective before the government during this period was to generate employment, eradicating poverty, ensuring nutrition, security to the vulnerable sections, basic services of drinking water, healthcare, population growth, primary education and shelter, empowering the disadvantaged groups like SC/STs and OBCs, promoting and developing people's participatory institutions and strengthening efforts to build self-reliance.

Rajasthan is the home of an astounding variety of traditional crafts. Some of the most artistic and exciting wares of Rajasthan are admired and collected by connoisseurs across the world. The handicrafts industry, through a plethora of small handicrafts units provides vast opportunities of employment. For the conservation of handicrafts industries the Government has established the Shilp and Mati Kala Board. More than 13 thousand small handicrafts units have been registered in a span of less than a year. The Government has never lagged behind in providing loans and financial assistance for the promotion of industries in the State.

The Rajasthan government has initiated various steps aimed at streamlining approval processes, promoting exports and providing better quality infrastructure. The main objective of these initiatives is to promote the investment and business climate in the State. The Economic Policy and Reforms

Council acts as the think tank on key economic and business matters. The council provides strategic inputs to the State government for increasing private sector participation creating resources, capabilities, infrastructure and systems so that economic activities can flourish in the State.

Besides this, a Single Window Scheme for entrepreneurs, the Government is working on a new industrial policy to resolve various difficulties of industrialists. Small and medium industrial units and entrepreneurs will be announced by March, 2010. The policy will lay emphasis on bringing security to investors in the years to come.

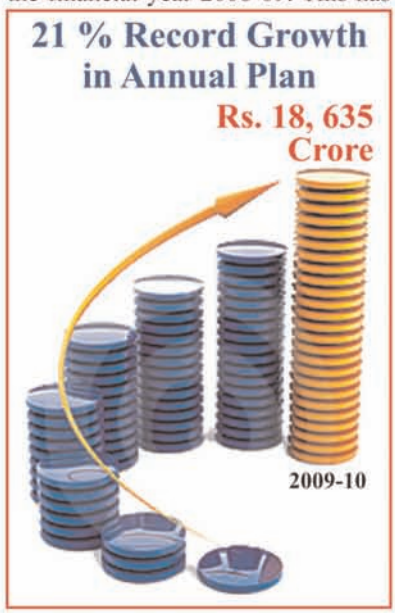
Chief Minister, Shri Ashok Gehlot has announced measures to expedite development work in the State, the reconstruction of Rajiv Gandhi Missions and a planning board for the speedy implementation of an action plan in the five areas for development identified by the State Government. Aiming at the all-round development of the common man the Gehlot government has announced a host of new policies to accelerate the development process.

Defying the common misconceptions of the people that an election manifesto is a just a piece of paper to lure and win over the electorate, Chief Minister, Shri Ashok Gehlot has taken the manifesto as a vision document dedicated to the well-being and growth of the common man, empowering the people socially and economically.

Shri Gehlot is a person who stays in contact with the masses, despite walking down the corridors of power. A true statesman with his vision focused on the overall development of the underprivileged. He believes that the fruits of development should be reaped by those who need it i.e. the common man.

State Government is aware that the people who are living below the poverty line need special help so that they can move forward and catch up with the economically stable class. Hence top priority has been given to social community services and the power sector including schemes related to education, health, drinking water, housing, urban development, social welfare and tribal development related programmes in the Annual Plan 2009-10.

The Annual Plan of the current financial year amounting to Rs. 17,322 crore, as approved by the Planning Commission, is 23.55% higher than the approved Annual Plan of Rs. 14,020 crore for the financial year 2008-09. This has further been increased to Rs. 18,635 crore, paving the way for balanced and continuous growth and development of the State.



Additional provision of Rs. 573 crore has been made in the Modified Budget on social services over and above the provisions made in the Budget Estimates of 2009-10. Education, Medical and Health, Family Welfare, Urban Development and Water Supply Schemes have been paid special heed.

The Government has committed to enact a fiscal responsibility and budget management legislation to improve the fiscal position of government. This will enable it to make larger investments in developing physical infrastructure in the State. It is reviewing the existing sector specific policies of the State (particularly of the IT and Mining sectors) to provide better incentives and enhance Rajasthan's competitive position vis-a-vis other business destinations within India and abroad. The Rajasthan government has initiated steps aimed at streamlining approval processes, promoting

export and knowledge intensive industries and providing better quality infrastructure.

Exhibiting its management skills, the government has invited large industrial houses to set up industries in the State.

- Development of roads with the cost of Rs. 2397.19 crore in a year.
- Under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna construction of 1 thousand 649 kilometres road connecting 529 villages having population more than 250.
- Under National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme 329 villages having population more than 250 have been connected with gravel roads.

The government is coming up with a new township policy to improve the urban infrastructure of the State. It will set up a corpus of Rs. 400 crore for the implementation of an action plan under the urban renewal plan. It is also planning to make Jaipur a world-class city and the action plan will be submitted by March, 2010.

In a bid easy road traffic in the city, Metro-Rail will start in March 2013, the Metro-rail ground level work will begin in March, 2010 and will be completed by March, 2013. 400 New buses will be made operational under the Bus Rapid Transit System to connect the Metro-Rail. Under a major boost the proposal of the new township 'Naya Jaipur' near Kho Nagoriyan, a notification for land acquisition will be issued soon. National and international town planners and designers will be invited to develop the area and a 4 km long approach tunnel. The JDA has marked nearly 105 square kilometre an area beyond Jhalana hills near Kho Nagoriyan to develop the new township. The ambitious underground tunnel proposed to connect Naya Jaipur to Shanti Path near Jawahar Bypass, passing through Jhalana hills, will add new dimensions to the face of Jaipur.

Other major decisions taken by the government include the development of a convention centre with world class auditorium, exhibition ground and healthcare centres. Knowledge City near Amber on the expressway, Science City near Achrol, "Gol Market" at Jawahar Circle and work on the ropeway are all in various stages of planning and implementation.

Energy is an essential input to all productive activities. Consumption of energy increases with the process of economic development. The Government of Rajasthan is striving to increase availability of power to

The efforts of the State government have brought swift and sustained development in the state that have put it on the world map.

In short, period of just one year of Rajasthan Government has redeemed the trust bestowed upon them by the public, in fulfilling its promise of working for the welfare of the common man. The Government has taken some important decisions, leading the State on the path of development and stands committed towards providing a responsive, transparent and accountable governance.

Ashok Gehlot
Chief Minister, Rajasthan

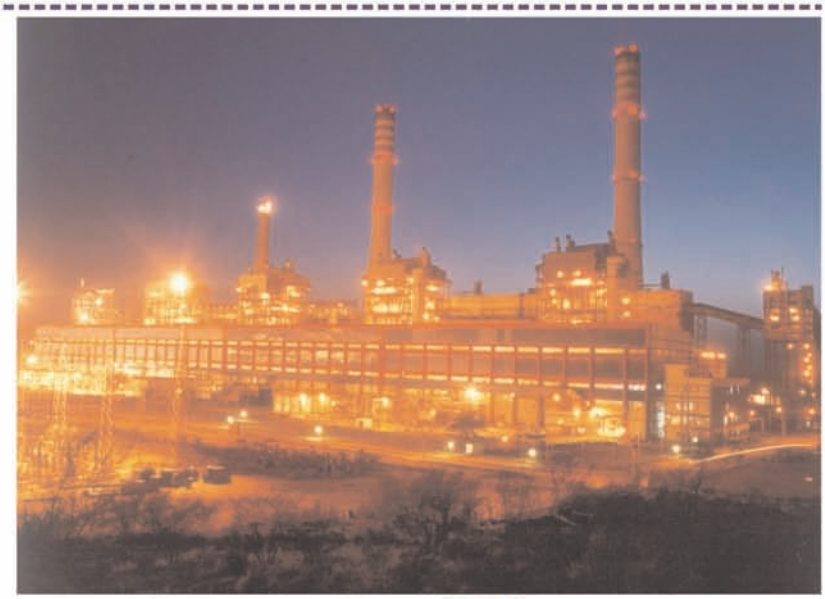
spur growth and development. Major steps have been taken-up to enhance power generation & strengthening of the system. This will lead to a quantum jump in the productivity and efficiency of the power sector.

Chief Minster, Shri Ashok Gehlot is providing top priority to the power sector.

electricity these power plants will become self-dependent in the near future.

Rajasthan Saga of Continuous Progress

- New policy is being planned for energy production by Bio gas.
- No power tariff increase for farmers in next five years.
- A separate scheme for domestic power connections for Ghanis having population less than 100.
- In urban areas power connection to BPL families in Rs. 2500/- only.
- Decision taken for 4780 MW Thermal Power Station in 12th five year plan.



The State Government has approved the establishment of three Super Critical Thermal Power Stations at Chhabra, Suratgarh and Banswara at an estimated cost of Rs. 24,000 crore. With the commencement of production of

The State Government has paid foremost attention to better health services offered to the people, particularly those living in the remote and distant areas. Steps have been taken to improve the medical facilities, infrastructure and creating awareness amongst the citizens. New healthcare units, dispensaries and hospitals have been established. District hospitals have been equipped with latest machines used in medical investigations and diagnosis. Rajasthan is the first State in the country to establish Swine Flu Labs at a cost of 5 crores at all divisional headquarters.

State Government has launched a scheme for providing 5 kg Deshi Ghee to women on their first delivery. Facilities to BPL families for

surgical operations under Mukhya Mantri Jeevan Raksha Kosh, are available in private hospitals also.

Jan Aushadhi Kendra has been started for providing medicines on low cost to the common man.

Administrative & Financial sanction has been accorded for creation of 2500 ANMs posts. 9 ICU, 18 Trauma Units, 18 Rehabilitation centers & 24 burn units will be established in district hospitals. Government employees and pensioners will be given expenses borne by them for treatment in private hospitals also.

Education is the tool that can change the fate of any one. Special schemes have been generated for the poor.

Sate government has issued orders to the State Public Service Commission to fill up the vacant posts of teachers. Rajasthan Knowledge Corporation is conducting various courses to upgrade the IT in the State.

Rs. 97.83 crore has been spent on 5632 additional classrooms under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Besides this, 7503 Toilets has been constructed spending an amount of Rs. 22.20 crores. State level committee has been set up for the preparation of english books.

Rs. 3.80 crore will be spent for women polytechnic college in Bharatpur. 273 new technical institution have been started out of which 46 MBA, 15 Engineering Colleges, 3 MCA, 5 Polytechnic Colleges & 204 Industrial Training Centres. Which has increased 48700 seats for admission to technical education. Rajasthan council of vocational education & training has been constituted for implementation of standard technical education & management training. Upper Primary Schools will be upgraded into secondary school at panchayat level.

Science & commerce faculty will be opened in 500 Government Higher Secondary Schools in 2009-10. Computer education will be started in 2000 secondary schools in State.

Decision has been taken to start the LEHAR (Learning Enhancement Activity in Rajasthan) in 4735 schools. Decision has been taken for the establishment of 13 universities in private sectors. Youth development centers have been established in all 126 Government Colleges of the

State & permission has been granted in these colleges for career counseling programme.

The Government has embarked on a journey to make agriculture a profitable and productive sector. State government has taken remarkable steps for the welfare of the farmers. Free of cost farming equipments have been distributed to 1,121 tribal farmers, 16.09 lakhs metric tones of fertilizers (NPK) have been distributed amongst them. 30,679 seeds mini kits have been distributed amongst women farmers for the kharif Crops. 22,774 quintals of seed, 8,758 tonnes of fertilizers and 2.77 lakhs of bio-fertilizers packets have been made available at the doorsteps of farmers. Rajasthan Horticulture Development Society has spent Rs. 12,700.32 lakh out which 2113.77 lakhs have been spent under State Planning, Rs. 2,551.87 under the Rashtriya Bagwani Mission, Rs. 3,598.56 lakhs under the micro irrigation plan.

- Power tariff will not be increased for farmers in next 5 years.
- Priority will be given to farmers in issuing agricultural power connections for installation of drip and sprinkler systems.
- New Land Acquisition Policy in the interest of farmers. Compensation is to be provided at a better rate than DLC.
- Rs. 239.72 crores spent on development work of mandi yards as well as construction / renovation of link roads.
- Mobile Veterinary units have been established in 19 districts. Pashu Chikitisalaya-Pashu Palak Ke Dwar Yojna has been implemented. Financial help of Rs. 885.89 lakh has been provided to the farmers under Kisan Jeevan Kalyan Yojna. Kisan Bhawans worth Rs. 24.7 crores have been built in various cities to provide lodging.

Advanced technical know-how on how to exploit the maximum water resources available, Government has provided a grant for sprinklers in 75,000 hectares, drip irrigation equipments in 20,000 hectares, 4,227 km-long irrigation pipeline and 221 diggee-cum-sprinklers facilities to the farmer.

> *"Today Rajasthan is experiencing a buyout growth. Every sector boasts of a success story that is unparallel, both in terms of quantity & quality."*

Soon after taking over Government Harit Rajasthan Project for glorious tomorrow was launched. Harit Rajasthan to make the State green. The flagship scheme envisaged planning of over 30 lakh saplings on vacant land in schools, colleges, hospitals and government offices as well as in public parks and along the roadside and highways.

Water is more important to Rajasthan than any other State for sustainable development and optimal utilization efforts have been initiated for water conservation through maintenance of wells, canals and other conventional water resources.

Drinking water projects of Rs. 907.05 crore for 10 towns, 665 villages and 2227 templets has been started.

Government has kept the provision Rs. 175 crores for Narbada, Rs. 20 crores for Gang Canal modernisation and Rs. 65.38 crores for new projects in Desert Tribal Areas.

27 small irrigation projects will be completed in this financial year.

A major initiative in empowering the Panchayati Raj Institutions has been taken in the State. Gram Sabhas have been empowered to identify priorities and execute development schemes. In Swarn Jaynti Gram Swarojgar Joyana 564241 swarozgaries to be benefited. Rs. 7968 crore has been spent from Dec. 2008 to Oct. 2009 through department of Rural Development.

State government has made serious efforts to quench the thirst of six crore people of Rajasthan by making various flawless policies and successfully implementing them.

The government employees are the face of the 60 million people coming from 33 districts. The government has taken appropriate measures to make people aware with full transparency of the working of government departments.

For increasing youth awareness in Rajasthan, Youth Clubs will be opened in every Panchayat of the State. Viewers Pavilion, Kho-Kho & Kabbadi Court completed in Vidhyadhar Nagar Stadium at Jaipur. Construction of Synthetic Athletic Track at SMS Stadium in Jaipur. For development of Co-operative sector in state, 500 Uphar Co-operative super markets will be opened. Reduced 1.5% interest rate in long term co-operative loans through co-operative land developments banks. Reduced 1.5-2 percent interest rate in housing loan's given by Sahkari Awasan Sangh. Decision for opening of centre co-operative banks at district level in new districts.

Under the leadership of Chief Minister, Ashok Gehlot, government is taking steps for the development of State. Several reformatory measures and policies coupled with strong determinations of the State Government has placed the State several notches high in terms of allround development. Entire development has been carried out by maintaining proper transparency, responsibility & accountability.

- Government employees and pensioners will be given expenses borne by them for treatment in private hospitals also. This facility also extended to BPL families.
- Prompt payment of Dearness Allowance to all government employees on the same day as announced by Government of India.

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Charge of the

What happens when Florence Nig

OVERNIGHT, a first-time MP was appointed Minister with independent charge for Human Health. The nurses union had been staging a *dharna* for weeks in a tent at the main gate of Nirman Bhavan. This *dharna* was staged annually to air grievances. In the daytime, a contingent of nurses in camel-coloured salwar uniforms would take turns in guarding the tent. The previous year's agitation had been about their refusal to wear white uniforms. A woman High Court judge, after hearing the matter for months, concluded that white uniforms were in the interest of patient care. But the nurses had forced the government to accede to their preference for the camel-coloured uniforms.

So accustomed was the Ministry to their strikes and their clout that no officer was willing to cross swords with them. They shouted their wants, led by a virago who had brought the government to its knees many a time. On that fateful day, the new Minister, sporting a Clark Gable moustache and a safari suit, screeched to a halt beside the tent. Having been briefed by his escort that these were Florence Nightingales, his heart bled for the ministering angels. He leapt out of his car, sprang into their tent, and settled down to confabulate with them. He introduced himself as the Health Minister and asked them what the problem was. The nurses moaned about how the Ministry had mistreated them and how its officers had been harassing them over a paltry increment. The Minister asked how much money was involved.

"Not even a couple of hundred rupees per nurse per month, sir."

The Minister held independent charge for Health for the entire country. Perched at the very pinnacle of the Bharat *sarkar*, he thought, if he could not give the poor women such a trifling raise then what was the point of being a Union Minister?

He came bounding up the stairs, thunderstruck with the glory of single-handedly doing the right thing by these deprived women. He sent for me and everyone else dealing with "paramedical services" and announced his decision. "I have decided to give them what they want. It is such a small amount and you should not grudge them this paltry increase," he said.

In the taut, condescending tone officers use for first-time Ministers, I told him what I had told his six predecessors: "Sir, this cannot be done without the approval of the Finance Ministry. If you give them an increase, relativities involving the entire gamut of medical staff would get disturbed. Doctors, paramedics down to *karamcharis* would also demand a hike. That would amount to a virtual Pay Commission for the health sector and the Finance Ministry will never agree."

This spiel had worked on the others but this time the reply was: "Oh, bha bha bha, what is it to you, Ma? You must feel for these women, Ma. I have given them my word, Ma. You people have troubled them for too long. Women, Ma. You should feel for them, Ma."

There were wooden faces in the phalanx of officials behind me. Although new to government, the Minister could tell from our hostile faces his order was not going to be obeyed. He must do what none had ever done. He must change the system.

As the seniormost officer (the Health Secretary was on a foreign jaunt), I felt bound to warn the Minister that fools rush in where angels fear to tread. More important, an escape route had to be found at once. "Sir, the nurses union has a long history of belligerence. Any move will open a Pandora's box of fresh issues. If you have given any assurance, you should immediately attribute everything to a language misunderstanding. You can blame your officers, if need be. But this avalanche of demands would be impossible to contain, once started," I said.

Hardly had I uttered those words, a bevy of nurses poured into the room with flowers, sweets and trailed by television cameramen. The Minister leapt up, patted the nurses in brotherly fashion, accepted their bouquets and was garlanded with roses by the nurses' union president.

The evening news gave full marks to the Minister for this historic *"samjhautha"*, overruling his pesky babus and displaying such compassion for the poor nurses. At 10 am the next day, the RAX (the inter-ministerial hotline between Ministers and senior officers) rang. The

So accustomed was the Ministry to their strikes and their clout that no officer was willing to cross swords with them. They shouted their wants, led by a virago who had brought the government to its knees many a time.

nurse brigade

Nightingales clash with the babus

I was reminded by the Cabinet Secretary of earlier instances of such inexcusable incompetence. All eyes in the room bored through me. A waiter sidled up to me, asking, *'Chai ya coffee?'*

Cabinet Secretary himself was on the line. "*Bhai, yeh sab kya kar diya apne*? You know perfectly well you cannot do this without the approval of the Finance Ministry. Why could you not advise your Minister? *Gaddar machega*. Go immediately to the Expenditure Secretary and sort it out."

I rushed to the Ministry of Finance. The Expenditure Secretary knew perfectly well what had happened but feigned ignorance and enjoyed listening to the story and observing my discomfiture. He was a past master at overturning the best proposals unless they came with an "*ishara*" (signal) from above. He took delight in rejecting laboriously argued requests by hectoring about financial recklessness and shortsightedness. And here was the perpetrator of such acts of profligacy standing before him in person. He was ready to chew me up but when the phone buzzed he decided to pass me on to smaller fry in the Finance Ministry. "You'd better sort it out with the Joint Secretary," he ordered. I ferreted my way to the room of one of the most difficult officers in the Finance Ministry – thoroughly trained by none other than the mountainous office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

"This cannot be tolerated, Madam," said he, enjoying an opportunity to talk down to a typical woman officer (all rhetoric and no substance) and IAS to boot. "You should have stopped the Minister. This is unheard-of. The Finance Ministry cannot agree to such an absurd proposal and you, Madam, will be squarely responsible for the fallout." He rolled his tongue in contempt as he clapped another dose of *paan bahar* into his mouth.

I returned to the Health Ministry, grinding my teeth at the sheer injustice of it all. Hardly had I entered my office when the nurses' union president

stormed in. "Who are you to try and stop the Minister from taking a just decision?" she said. She threatened a strike and told me that 10,000 nurses in Delhi would join it if I did not issue orders.

The afternoon news bulletin announced the lightning strike by Delhi nurses. I went to the Minister's office and told him what the Cabinet Secretary and Finance Ministry had said and the crisis we were in. "What should we do, Ma?" he beamed back.

SINCE he was on good terms with the Prime Minister, I suggested, he could alert the latter at once because no one in between was going to do anything and a nurses' strike could bring health services to a halt.

"Request the PM to set up a committee," I said. The Minister pounced on the idea and spoke to someone on the RAX, asking whether he could drop in. Sirens screeching, we went to Yojana Bhavan, to the room of the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission.

I was asked to state the case. I poured forth whatever I knew about the long history of strikes that the Ministry had witnessed over the years. I mentioned how many times efforts had been made to give all kinds of allowances to every member of the medical fraternity but how anything done in isolation would most certainly lead to a slew of strikes which we could ill afford. I warned that in the past the strikes had invariably gone in favour of the employees and in view of the impending strike, it might be prudent to persuade the Finance Ministry to part with something straightaway rather than wait for it to snowball into sympathy strikes from the entire medical and para-medical cadres.

Silence followed my monologue. Then, the vice-head of India's biggest policymaking empire placed the fingertips of both hands together and pronounced: "You have two alternatives. You can be firm or not be firm." He rose, signifying that the meeting was over.

The Minister thanked him profusely. "I don't know how to thank you, sir. We will do just as you say, sir."

By the time we reached the Health Ministry, news had come in that the PMO had appointed a Punjabi political stalwart from Delhi to negotiate with the nurses union. Everyone heaved a sigh of relief because at last the matter was going to be handled politically. Someone in the PMO had had a brainwave and suggested negotiations between two Punjabis, *biradari* connections being more durable than cement.

At 4 pm, the emissary strode beaming down the corridors of the Health Ministry accompanied by cameras and a gaggle of women journos. In the vanguard came a team of officers from the Ministry of Finance and the Department

In the taut, condescending tone officers use for first-time Ministers, I told him what I had told his six predecessors: 'Sir, this cannot be done without the approval of the Finance Ministry.'

of Personnel. Whoever had thought of this ploy had really thought it through. The condescending Joint Secretary from the Finance Ministry was there, smiling away. Another surprise was the arrival of a battleship from the Department of Personnel famed for her toughness in handling union negotiations. She too had been dispatched to defuse the tension and "protect Government's interest". Obviously someone high up in the hierarchy had understood that it was better to find a face-saving solution than have a strike on hand.

BUT if the powers that be had thought that the loquacious negotiator could soften his female namesake in *"assi-tussi"* Punjabi, they were hugely mistaken. The lady turned out to be a no-nonsense negotiator. She had lost no time in bringing 27 government hospitals to a halt throughout the city. BBC and CNN had already relayed pictures of hapless patients lying unattended, ventilator wires snapped, and injection trays lying unused.

Behind the scenes, an ebullient young woman Director gave the Punjabi political envoy a brilliant smile with an equally brilliant idea scribbled on a scrap of paper. Of course she had neither consulted Mr Woodenhead from Finance nor Battleship from Personnel. A first-time entrant to the Ministry, she was acutely aware of the fact that proximity to political stalwarts did more to push careers than following systems and procedures. The envoy accepted her advice gratefully and entered the conference room from a side door, clasping the scrap of paper to his chest. Handpicked as he was to conduct negotiations with the nurses, surely he was not expected to consult anyone. In full view of television cameras and a packed conference room, he gushed forth into the microphones in an avalanche of three languages.

As he beamed before the cameras, the nurses clapped and thumped the table. The adrenalin shot up in the negotiator's veins, making him blind and deaf to what the emissaries from the bastions of Finance and Personnel were cautioning at full volume. What the interlocutor had announced amounted to an increase of 50 per cent over what the nurses had been seeking. His jaw dropped when they pointed out sternly that what he had just announced was simply not feasible and he had no power to make such pronouncements. The ensuing melee turned into a free-for-all between the nurses and bureaucrats. The plenipotentiary crumpled the scrap of paper and slipped away from the scene, ruing the day he got entangled with the Ministry of Human Health.

News of the debacle reached the PMO and we were duly summoned before the Prime Minister at 6 pm. My heart was in my mouth by then and my only thought was that I would be lucky to keep my present job, knowing full well that chances of becoming a Secretary were now doomed.

The gathering before the Prime Minister was 15-strong. The Cabinet Secretary was already there, warbling nonstop, speaking so fast that it was impossible to know whose side he was on. It sounded as though he was annoyed and sympathetic at the same time. The Secretary-General of Human Health Services was in cahoots with the nurses, slumped in the second row, making himself as unobtrusive as possible. The Prime Minister was calmly helping himself to *vada*s and *chutney* proffered by gloved waiters who sashayed around, balancing silver trays.

The main trouble-shooter on behalf of the Prime Minister ordered me to start the briefing. I did so, skipping any mention of how the situation had arisen. As soon as I finished, the bureaucrats swooped. What a sorry pass the Government had been brought to because of rank ineptitude, they said. I was reminded by the Cabinet Secretary of earlier instances of such inexcusable incompetence. All eyes in the room bored through me. A waiter sidled up to me, asking, *"Chai ya coffee?"*

The Prime Minister wiped his chin and said, "Resolve the matter quickly." The teaparty was over. As we shuffled into the foyer, I wondered to myself what I could have done differently.

The nurses managed to extract 100 per cent more than what they had been asking for from the great Indian bureaucracy. The Secretary-General of Human Health Services, the lone representative of the medical profession, licked his lips in the knowledge that the doctors would be the next to get the bonanza – and effortlessly at that.

The next morning, the Human Health Minister, back from his constituency, sent for me. Grinning broadly, he said, "What did I tell you, Ma? Take it from me, your Women's Reservation Bill will never be passed. These men don't want it, whatever they may say. You are a woman. Only women can feel for other women. You must feel for 'sisters'. When you have the chance, help them, Ma." g

Although new to government, the Minister could tell from our hostile faces his order was not going to be obeyed. He must do what none had ever done. He must change the system.

The author is an ex-Chief Secretary, Delhi

(The characters and events are imaginary and any similarity to a person or incident is coincidental.)

by S Subramanium

A NAXAL STORY...
By Diptendra Raychaudhuri
Vitasta Publishing Pvt Ltd
Rs 300

THIS book was originally published with the title, *Seeing through the Stones: A tale from the Maoist land*. Though the new title is obviously market-friendly, it does not seem that the author had an eye on the market when he wrote the book. It encapsulates the gamut of the Naxalite movement, from its early days to the mid-1990s. Moreover, it is set against a very large canvas and traverses the various contours of the country's transformation from the 1940s to the end of the century. It is not just a saga of violence and counter-violence; it is also a story of aspiration and achievement. It is a political novel and tangentially refers to the Jharkhand movement, to Indira Gandhi, and several other political components. In the same breath, it reflects feudal India's yearning to be a part of the capitalist system, and the globalized economy. It includes the NGO movements, the shortcomings of the Church, the shortsightedness of state officials, and the war of assertion of the Dalits and tribals. It is truly a narrative from the Maoist land. Labelling it a Naxal story is reducing a tree to a seed.

The protagonist, Mahendra Chamar, is a Naxal leader. But his journey through life goes far beyond the limits of Naxalism. He shudders at the new techniques of Naxals and the movement's increasing dependence on arms. And, rising above the mundane, as a novel should, the narrative then deals with Mahendra's loss of sanity and his battle against the gods. He says, "I challenged the gods long ago, and now they are taking revenge on me. I am losing my mind....I will not let them win. I have decided to forget my past before they erase my memory!" His fight against the political system is thus equated to a fight against the age-old socio-cultural structure.

It is truly a narrative from the Maoist land. Labelling it a Naxal story is reducing a tree to a seed

Armed Naxals: how long will they march?

AMARENDRA KISHORE & MANOJ SINGH

The logical extension of this theme leads one to wonder whether the Naxalite movement can be fought by the state. Or, is it incumbent upon civil society to do away with the evils that have created so many forms of inequalities? In that sense, this book challenges the common perception that pumping money into backward areas will eliminate the movement. As Mahendra says, "They address their children as 'tum'. But we are always 'tu', because we are not human beings....For that I have sacrificed everything. I did it for all of us, for our wives and children...because I wanted to promote our lot to 'tum' from 'tu'."

The presence of a large number of characters may prove distracting for a not particularly attentive reader. Even the plot is not linear. Like waves in the sea, various subplots rise and fall through the book.

The writing also needs editing. At times the language is superb, at others faltering. The fact that it is in Indian English should not be a major problem. It has probably worked advantageously for the author, in his interweaving of the *Gita*'s philosophy with Maoism! Just that the novel will read better, if the language is standardized throughout. g

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dedication. Superb. Am sure, the past and future contributions would be remembered for long and imbibed by the generations.

Subhash Mendhapurkar
sutrahp@gmail.com
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'Meghalaya is the least corrupt state in the Northeast'

The Meghalaya CM talks about his humble beginnings and his modern vision

I started life in a small village, Nongjri, in Ri Bhoi district of Meghalaya and began working as a road labourer at a very young age as my family was very poor. One day, the pastor of a nearby church said to my mother, "This boy should get a good education." So he took me to his village, Umroi. There I studied as well as worked with him. I had to interrupt my studies five times due to lack of money. I would earn some money and go back to school.

After education, I served as a schoolteacher for five years. Then I became a typist in the Assam Civil Secretariat and was promoted to lower division assistant and served for 13 years. I worked my way up to sub-inspector of schools and was in that job for 10 years. Then, in 1972, I joined politics to serve the people in a wider way.

Throughout my life, I have wanted to help the people. In an office job, I found myself handicapped. I couldn't move freely to help people. So my attendance in office became irregular. I decided that I should not harass my officers and do injustice to my job.

I was elected as an independent MLA from Nongpoh in 1972. I did not belong to any party. Later, Chief Minister WA Sangma roped me into the Congress and appointed me Minister of State in 1973.

At that time, there were lots of strong parties in the state and people opposed the Congress. But I chose to join it as I admire Mahatma Gandhi and all the leaders who fought for independence. I became Chief Minister of Meghalaya for the first time in 1992. This is the fifth time I have become CM.

I have done lots of good work but I haven't been able to do much developmental planning. My first duty is to provide employment for youth. I am also giving priority to health and education.

Shillong has become an educational

Now I'm concentrating on development. I have to defuse the agitation by the underground because of lack of employment. When the well educated youth cannot get employment, they join gangsters.

RAJEEV DABRAL

I went to Singapore to propose a Shillong link. The same can be done with Bangkok. I went to Mumbai for a film festival. Nine Bollywood stars have accepted my request to make Meghalaya a film destination.

hub. People from other states, even from Bangladesh and the US, come to study in Shillong. Education is a sort of tourism industry. People become permanent tourists because they stay for the duration of their study.

Now we have got a stable government. When there is a coalition government, development is affected. There are 60 members in the Assembly, and 28 are from the Congress. The rest are from the coalition parties. Disputes between tribal communities and the like are issues of the past. Now, we live together peacefully and respect one another.

NOW I'm concentrating on development. I have to defuse the agitation by the underground because of lack of employment. When the well educated youth cannot get employment, they join gangsters.

I am also looking at foreign investment. I went to Singapore and said there should be a Singapore-Shillong link. The same can be done with Bangkok. I went to Mumbai for a film festival. Nine Bollywood stars have accepted my request to be members of the task force to make Meghalaya a film destination. The task force includes people like Shyam Benegal.

We want to have a single window task force agency through which people can invest. This task force is for tourism, for a food park and also for IT. I want to see Meghalaya as the first digitally literate state of India.

Air-India has agreed to have a flight from Delhi to Kolkata, Tura and Shillong. When there is connectivity, tourists and investors will come. Now we have requested the Central government for Guwahati-Bangkok flights with a stop in Shillong.

I attended an Indo-Japan golf tournament and had a meeting. I'll be involved in the tournament and the Japanese

have agreed to come to Shillong to discuss Meghalaya-Japanese collaboration to build up the golf course to international standards. It is one of the best golf courses in the Northeast.

Then, we are setting up the North Eastern Indira Gandhi Institute of Health & Medical Sciences (NEIGRIHMS). It will be inaugurated shortly. The Central government has responded excellently with the launch of the 7th Indian Institute of Management, called the Rajiv Gandhi Indian Institute of Management, here. We also have the North Eastern Hill University, which runs MA, MSc, MPhil, PhD, and certificate and diploma courses. We have lots of good schools.

REGARDING road and transport, much is to be done but we want to have a road connection to Bangladesh. Also, I have approached an airline in South Africa on having a flight from Shillong to Dhaka. We are concentrating on Bangladesh because it is not a very rich country. We can sell or export many things like minerals, limestone and coal. We can produce cement. Lots of new schemes are there and lots of investors are coming up. We are allowing Public-Private Partnership.

The people of Meghalaya are not as poor as some think. If they can afford to go to Delhi, why not elsewhere, like Bangkok, Hong Kong and Singapore. We have improved a lot in education, increasing the literacy rate to 80-85 per cent. Our budget is Rs 2,100 crore. Out of this, non-Plan budget is almost 50 per cent, that is, 50 per cent for development and 50 per cent for salaries and other expenditure. Besides this, we've got lots of Centrally-sponsored schemes worth almost Rs 4,000 crore.

Scenic Meghalaya: picture-postcard perfection

We can sell or export many things like minerals, limestone and coal. We can produce cement. Lots of new schemes are there and lots of investors are coming up. We are allowing Public-Private Partnership.

We are very rich in art and culture. Traditional institutes for the tribals must be there and land belonging to tribal communities must be preserved.

Agro and forest-based industries should also come up. We have 20 cement factories. Training of 1000 youths for digitalization is underway, subsidized by the Central government.

Connectivity is our priority. That includes development of national highways. The "look east policies" will go through our state.

Most people in the state speak Hindi and English. Because of this, call centres are opening up here. Due to our quality of treatment, a lot of patients from outside come here. I also want to promote the Food Park. We are farmers by nature, 85 per cent of people in the rural area are farmers. Their products should be exported outside. We are also very developed in sericulture.

The bureaucracy and Ministers are very decent here. Meghalaya is the least corrupt state in the Northeast.

Some companies have offered to develop five-star hotels in Shillong. Some want to construct an international spiritual home here.

I am happy Meghalaya is moving on the right track but a lot remains to be done. g

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birthdays

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TRACKING

For a complete list of appointments & retirements, see ***www.gfilesindia.com***

DESHRAJ SINGH
The 1990-batch IPS officer of the Haryana cadre is now DIG in the BPR&D in the Government of India.

ANUP BADHAWAN
The 1985-batch IAS officer of the Uttarakhand cadre has become Principal Secretary.

UDIPTA RAY
The 1994-batch IAS officer of the AGMUT cadre who is Secretary, Goa, has been transferred from Goa to Puducherry.

R SELLAMUTHU
The 1976-batch IAS officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre has been appointed Chairman of the Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission.

UDAY KUMAR VERMA
The 1976-batch IAS officer of the Madhya Pradesh cadre has become Commissioner, Employees Provident Fund Organization.

NEETA KAPOOR
The 1973-batch IDAS officer has been appointed Controller General Defence Accounts (CGDA).

SUMAN BALA
The 1987-batch IPS officer of the West Bengal cadre is joining the CBI as Joint Director.

R GOPALAN
The 1976-batch IAS officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre has become Secretary, Financial Services.

BHUPINDER PRASAD
The 1976-batch IAS officer of the UT cadre is now Secretary, Justice in the Government of India.

RP SINGH
The 1976-batch IAS officer of the Andhra Pradesh cadre has been appointed Secretary, Industrial Policy and Promotion in the Government of India.

AE AHMAD
The 1976-batch IAS officer of the Manipur-Tripura cadre is the new Secretary, Border Management in the Government of India.

ACHAL KUMAR JOTI
The 1975-batch IAS officer of the Gujarat cadre has been appointed Chief Secretary of Gujarat.

SUKHDEO SINGH
The 1987-batch IAS officer is now Principal Secretary to Jharkhand Chief Minister Shibu Soren.

VIJAYLATA REDDY
The 1975-batch IFS officer has become Secretary (Headquarters) in the Ministry of External Affairs.

PRAKASH CHANDRA
The 1973-batch IRS officer has taken over as Member of the CBDT.

RAJIV SHARMA
The 1976-batch IAS officer of the Rajasthan cadre has become Additional Chief Secretary in the state.

RP AGRAWAL
The 1986-batch IPS officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre is joining the CBI as Joint Director.

MS DHAKAD
The 1989-batch IFS officer of the Madhya Pradesh cadre has joined UNIDO as Programme Director (India) at Bengaluru.

SV PRASAD
The 1975-batch IAS officer of the Andhra Pradesh cadre has been appointed Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh.

ALOK PERTI
The 1977-batch IAS officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre is now Additional Secretary, Coal.

SANTANU THAKUR
The 1997-batch IAS officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre has become Secretary to Government of Assam, Sports and Youth Welfare Department.

PRABODH KUMAR
The 1988-batch IPS officer of the Punjab cadre is joining the CBI as Joint Director.

RAM PHAL PAWAR
The 1988-batch IPS officer of the West Bengal cadre has been made IG in the SPG.

SL THAOSEN
The 1988-batch IPS officer of the Madhya Pradesh cadre is now IG in the SPG.

RAJIV TANDON
The 1988-batch IPS officer of the Madhya Pradesh cadre is joining the CBI as Joint Director.

AS BALANATHAN
The 1976-batch IFS officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre is now Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Head of Forest Force), Tamil Nadu.

BB NANAWATI
The 1981-batch IRS (IT) officer has been appointed Deputy Director General in the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDA) under the Planning Commission.

Moving On: ias and ips officers retiring in January 2010

ANDHRA PRADESH
PV Bhide (1973)
BIHAR
MP Singh (1992)
HARYANA
SK Maheshwari (1994)
Jammu & Kashmir
VK Bakshi (1995)
KARNATAKA
D Thangaraj (1977)
MAHARASHTRA
Leena Mehendale (1974)
MADHYA PRADESH
RC Sahni (1972)
NAGALAND
RS Pandey (1972)
ORISSA
B Sahoo (1993)
TAMIL NADU
Ujagar Singh (1977)
UTTAR PRADESH
Rita Sharma (1974)
WEST BENGAL
B Mahapatra (1973)

ips

ASSAM-MEGHALAYA
N Mohan Dutta (1986)
BIHAR
BS Jayant (1975)
CHHATTISGARH
OP Rathore (1973)
GUJARAT
Gurinder Singh (1972)
HARYANA
Koshy Koshy (1973)
JHARKHAND
RC Kaithal (1997)
KERALA
MGA Ramen (1972)

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Use corrections as investment opportunities

THE question uppermost in the minds of investors is whether the markets will test 21,000 – the high reached in January 2008. Looking to the impressive rise during 2009, most analysts have started predicting a very positive outlook for 2010. Though none can fully predict what lies in store for 2010, before making pronouncements one has to understand the ground realities facing the economy – both at home and abroad.

The 7.9 per cent growth in India's GDP for the second quarter came as a welcome surprise coupled with signs of increasing private consumption and pick up in investment demand. All this has improved the business confidence index though we need to be more watchful on IIP numbers in days to come. But at 17,000-18,000 levels, the market appears to have discounted all the positives for FY 2010.

Though future progress on reforms such as PSU disinvestments can take the markets to newer highs, Dubai-like shocks from the global markets may be followed by sharp sell-offs and deep corrections during the year. However, any uncertainties in growth of most of the advanced economies will ensure that the monetary policy remains loose there, which will ensure ample funds flowing to emerging markets. Though our markets may have priced in all the positives, with a convincing long-term story, the prices may go yet higher in the short run – say, the first quarter of 2010, when the markets may enter an euphoric zone. The current PE ratio, which looks unreasonably high, may moderate a bit when growth catches up with the markets.

But the way our markets will perform depends a lot on continued inflows of foreign funds which in turn depend upon the conditions prevalent there. The belief that our markets will continue to do well solely on the strength of our economy has already been shattered. Therefore, what happens abroad is equally important for us. There are plenty of unresolved issues such as the commercial property market in the US, pick up in employment figures, end of the huge investment boom in China, potential bank failures due to the need for capital, and so on.

Any uncertainties in growth of most of the advanced economies will ensure that the monetary policy remains loose there, which will ensure flow to emerging markets

The recovery in the West has so far been pushed up by excessive liquidity and that too has not been sharp enough and is sub-par in affording comfort for a stable growth outlook in future. What will happen when the stimulus is withdrawn? The high leverage in US consumers' balance sheets and over-capacity in global manufacturing are serious matters of concern.

The next year will witness the fading away of the effects of government spending and concessions since quite a lot of it is non-recurring. Further stimulus or concessions may be ruled out due to high fiscal deficit and debt burden already faced by policymakers. The focus is bound to shift to restoring stability in the financial system rather than promoting credit growth liberally as in the pre-crises period. The high rate of inflation will complicate the matter further due to the fact that the RBI has to do away with accommodative monetary policy. The businesses are still wary of taking up the expansionary path which may pose challenges in sustaining the growth momentum.

For 2010, the investors should be mentally prepared for sharp corrections whenever the markets make a new high. But such corrections can be used as good investment opportunities since the long-term story remains intact. However, interest rates and the rupee's movement vis-a-vis the dollar need to be watched closely.

Happy New Year and happy investing in 2010!

Bhagwati Autocast

(CMP Rs 28)

THE company produces SG iron castings and alloy iron castings and boasts of a very impressive client list. The current market price discounts the EPS of the trailing twelve months by a PE of just 4.4 as against the industry PE of 11.2 which gives the stock immense scope to appreciate. The fact that the company has paid a dividend of 8 per cent and has a book value of more than Rs 39 makes the stock an absolutely safe bet at this point of the market. With the auto sector making a turnaround and likely to do well in future, the stock is due for a rerating. Investors can earn decent returns with a time span of one to two years with a negligible downside risk. g

The author has no exposure in the stock recommended in this column. gfiles does not accept responsibility for investment decisions by readers of this column. Investment-related queries may be sent to gfilesindia@gmail.com with Dr Sood's name in the subject line.

Vigilance begins at home!

THE Registrar of Companies (ROC), New Delhi functions from a swanky office in Nehru Place, which is a centre for financial experts and Chartered Accountants. But its Record Room is situated in far-off Manesar, Haryana – some 55 km and three hours' drive away. And not less than 10 officers visit the Record Room daily to look up files, match records and

so on – for which each is paid TA/DA varying from Rs 700 to Rs 1000. So, an office which is supposed to be keeping a vigilant eye on the balance sheets of corporate houses and other companies is nurturing a racket of its own.

The seeds of this racket were sowed by a Haryana IAS officer of the 1983 batch. While on deputation as Joint Secretary, Administration in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, he got an industrial plot in his father's name at Sector 5, Manesar, let out to the ROC for Rs 3.5 lakh. The usual rate for rent of similar properties in the area is not more than Rs 50,000. Interestingly, the plot was acquired when he was MD, Haryana Industrial Development Corporation. At the time when the MOC rented the property, the officer did not call for quotations for acquiring a place on rent. Nor did he seek a suitability report. The building, located in the Industrial Area, is unfit to house an office as a slight error could start a fire.

A soiree of babus

"BUREAUCRATS too are educated," was the comment by Ashok Vajpeyi that provoked hearty chuckles from the gathering at the release of a book on poet and reformer Maulana Altaf Hussain Hali by SY Quraishi, Election Commissioner of India. Since Vajpeyi is also an IAS officer (1967 batch), the

laughter was all the louder.

Vajpeyi, who is Chairman, Lalit Kala Akademi, took the opportunity to remind other bureaucrats to diversify their skills and interests in order to inculcate values rather than corruption and *"chori"* (filching), which, he pointed out, was on the rise among in the bureaucracy. The book, *Hali – Kavi Ek Roop Anek*, is a painstaking exercise by Quraishi who utilized his postings in Karnal and Panipat to research the life and work of the poet.

CBI's angel in khaki

IT'S rare to find a policewallah who is sensitive and in touch with the common man's perception. One such officer is Ashwini Kumar, Director of the dreaded and controversial CBI. Though his job bestows on him a ruthless image, yet he is considered a "decent policeman".

Much of this, perhaps, is owed to the fact that he is a masterful cartoonist and also has an abiding interest in cinema with a message. Those who know him well are all praise for his simplicity. But all this does not make him a weak cop. He means business when it comes to unravelling conspiracies, on which he can hold forth with as much authority as on the arts, literature and academics. The presence of more officers like him in the services would have brought about a sea change in the general impression of the bureaucracy and also ensured impartial governance.

SAIL in choppy waters

STRANGE goings-on in a Navratna PSU: the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)! Outgoing chairman Sushil Kumar Roongta, reputed as a thorough professional, appears not to be seeking an extension. According to the advertisement by the Public Enterprise Bureau, the Chairman is equivalent to Additional Secretary. However, disregarding all parameters, Joint Secretaries are applying for the job! Worse, they are even mobilizing support for their candidature despite being ineligible. Sunil Arora (IAS, 1980, Rajasthan cadre), former CMD, Indian Airlines, is one of the applicants.

However, there are ways to circumvent all this. It is

ILLUSTRATIONS: ARUNA

learnt that the panel, after scrutiny and other "mandatory" procedures, shall scrap the whole exercise and a new search will be started. This time, the Cabinet Secretariat will be authorized to look for a "suitable" incumbent. And, what's more, this suitability will not be made public! g

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